7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

THE KUCCIJA

Among the peculiar customs which still exist in Malta, the *kuccija* may perhaps rank first.

The *kuccija* is an elaborate entertainment given by the parents on the first anniversary of their children's birth.

The company of relations and friends having assembled, the child is brought in and if it be a boy he is presented with a basket or tray containing corn, sweetmeats, coins, an inkstand, a candle, a rosary, a book, a sword, and other toys—if the baby is a girl, needles, silks and ribbands supply the place of the sword and inkstand.

The choice the baby makes on this occasion will, according to Maltese notions, give a just idea of his future disposition and the profession which he will follow. Should he choose the corn

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

852 it is a sign of a liberal character—if he
[787] picks out the inkstand it points towards
[828] inclination for trade or the bar—if he takes the book, the rosary or the candle the assumption is that he intends to dedicate his life to the service of the church.

[574] When the baby makes his or her selection, the guests are treated with refreshments, and they all drink the health and future prospects of the small individual in question.

FUNERALS

764 On the death of a Maltese, two or
767 three women called *Neuuieha*, hired for
[533] the occasion, and attired in long mourning cloaks, immediately entered the house of the deceased singing in a low and dismal voice, some appropriate deathsong. These women cut away

8:Brockman T-5 (no date) 1938
EZ6 Malta EZ6

174 584 825 which conferred on him "such Wisdom, Prowess, and good fortune . . . that Fame and Prosperity always attended him thereafter." Tennyson, describing his mystic Lady of the Lake, has:

> And o'er her breast floated the Sacred Fish.

The Saviour Himself was symbolized by the early Christians as a fish. Julius Africanus, an early Christian writer, said of Christ that He was the Great Fish, caught by the Hook of God, whose flesh nourishes the whole world.[1]

This bridal fish, then, may be in some sense a sacramental offering as well as a mere symbol.

584 789 828 The anointing of the bride's lips is yet another custom which, like the miniature "garden inclosed" of the marriageable girl, recalls the Canticle of Canticles:

> Thy lips my spouse are as a dropping honeycomb, honey and milk are under thy tongue. . . .[2]

585 174 The whole of this marriage ceremony is reminiscent of the old Fertility cults—the cakes, sweetmeats, nuts, grain, all in honour of the fertile Mother whose bountiful Earth is carried in a bowl bearing effigies of the bride and bridegroom whom it is hoped she will bless with her own fecundity and riches.

EVERYDAY HABITS

771 788 Grez, the housewife, will go about her daily tasks carefully following a thousand small rules, most of which have their English parallels. She will never cut a loaf without first making the Sign of the Cross on it with forefinger or knife. If the loaf falls to the ground, she will kiss it by way of asking pardon. She will not sweep her house after sunset for fear of [754] sweeping away good fortune. She will take care not to throw her "combings" out of doors. Should anyone wish her ill it

[1] *The Lost Language of Symbolism.* [2] *Song of Solomon*, IV, ii.